

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 282 185

CS 008 824

AUTHOR Kitao, S. Kathleen
 TITLE Developing Exercises for Reading Materials.
 PUB DATE Jul 82
 NOTE 17p.; In: Proceedings for the International Conference in Seoul (2nd, Seoul, Korea, July 27-30, 1982).
 PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Journal Articles (080) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
 JOURNAL CIT English Teaching; n24 suppl p153-167 1982
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS English (Second Language); Foreign Students; Higher Education; Japanese; *Reading Comprehension; *Reading Instruction; *Reading Materials; Reading Processes; *Reading Skills; *Second Language Instruction; Vocabulary Development
 IDENTIFIERS *English Teachers

ABSTRACT

Intended for teachers of English as a second language, this paper treats the common problems instructors encounter in helping students improve their English language reading skills and offers practical exercises designed to enhance the reading experience for foreign students. Following an introductory section that discusses the particular difficulties reading in English presents for Japanese students, the paper discusses the selection of materials--asking the teacher to keep in mind the students' purposes and interests in studying English, the diverse literary forms that can be used, as well as other considerations, such as bias, length, difficulty, and the advisability of using reading materials written in standard English. Next the paper deals with vocabulary definition, and subsequently enumerates the basic skills necessary for reading, including skimming for an overall impression, scanning for specific information, recognizing the main idea of a selection, noting details and understanding relationships, and understanding the sequence of ideas or events. The major portion of the article discusses the purpose and development of various types of reading exercises, such as (1) skimming exercises, (2) comprehension questions, (3) chart exercise, (4) organization exercise, (5) visualization exercise, (6) cloze exercise, (7) outline exercise, and (8) discussion questions. (NKA)

 * Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
 * from the original document. *

ED282185

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Developing Exercises for Reading
Materials

S. Kathleen Kitao

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

S. Kathleen Kitao

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS 008824

Supplement to *English Teaching* No. 24 (1982).
 The Journal of the College English Teachers' Association
 of Korea: The Proceedings for the Second International
 Conference in Seoul, July 27-30

Developing Exercises for Reading Materials

S. Kathleen Kitao

(Doshisha Women's College)

Reading is defined by Harris and Sipay, in *How to Increase Reading Ability*, as "the meaningful interpretation of written or printed verbal symbols" (Harris and Sipay, 1975, p. 5). In the beginning, the student learns that those strange-looking marks represent sounds. Gradually, the student learns to recognize a series of sounds — a word — more and more quickly and accurately. Eventually, the student comes to recognize phrases and see them as units of meaning. Ideally, as the student begins to read more complex material, he/she masters more complex forms of expression and enlarges his/her store of concepts, ideas and information. The student begins to differentiate types of reading — reading a novel for pleasure from reading a textbook from reading a TV schedule — and develops different strategies for each type. The student is able to compare what he/she is reading with other things he/she has read, opinions, previous experiences, and so on. (Harris and Sipay, 1975, pp. 5-7)

Most Japanese students have developed only the lower-level skills in reading English. They know the correspondence between symbols and sounds and can recognize words, but beyond that, they tend to translate word for word into Japanese and to understand the passage in Japanese. They do not give one word or sentence any more weight than any other. Reading is simply decoding something in English and re-encoding it into Japanese. College reading textbooks have notes in Japanese and translations rather than definitions of difficult words, so translation is encouraged rather than discouraged. Because texts contain mostly narratives or essays, students

are rarely exposed to other literary forms, and they don't learn strategies for dealing with other types of material.

Selecting Materials—Why, Where and How.

There are a number of reasons that a teacher might want to select his/her own reading material and develop exercises for it. "A teacher may wish to give a functional dimension to an existing language course that is structure-based and to use her own materials to enrich her lesson" (Khoo, 1979, p. 55). The teacher may also want to make the course more relevant to students' interests or to tailor it to fit students' needs better. The teacher may want to emphasize a particular topic, for example, he/she may want to teach English through teaching about an English-speaking culture and thus help his/her students understand the context of the language better.

The teacher may choose to write material for classroom use or to select authentic material. In either case, there are a number of things to think about.

1. Students' purposes for studying English

The teacher should keep the students' purposes for studying English in mind when selecting or writing materials. Will students be going to an English-speaking country? If so, will they be going there to travel? to study? to attend professional conferences? These possibilities and others should be taken into account. The material should be meaningful to the students in terms of their purpose for studying English.

2. Students' interests.

The teacher should also keep the students' interests in mind, since the students will obviously be more motivated to read material that they find interesting and meaningful than material that is boring or that they are unable to relate to. The reading material should contain information that is new to the students. Otherwise, it will not be interesting to them.

3. Literary forms

Reading has traditionally been taught using the essay or narrative form, but reading tests show that students have difficulty with other forms — poetry, dialogue, directions, and so on (Kitao and Miyamoto, 1982). Students should be exposed to a wide variety of literary forms in reading classes. This is where authentic material can be particularly helpful. With some

literary forms, for example, poetry, the teacher will want students to understand the meaning detail. Other literary forms, for example, a menu, the teacher may only want the students to understand in general. It is probably more important for the students to see an English menu and how it is laid out than for them to understand what lasagna is.

4. Bias

The teacher should be careful about using biased material. It is probably better to use unbiased material, unless the emphasis is on critical reading and the teacher is trying to teach students to recognize bias in reading passages. This is a fairly high-level skill, and it is usually only appropriate for more advanced students.

5. Length

The teacher should be careful not to write or select material that is too long. As a general rule, unless the teacher plans to give reading assignments as homework, the reading should be short enough to allow the students to read it three times in class, with enough time left over to do the related exercises and discuss the answers. Length also depends on students' level of reading ability. Lower-level students have difficulty reading long passages, even if the passage is easy.

6. Difficulty

The passage should be slightly beyond students' reading ability. If it is too easy, students' level of reading ability will not improve; if it is far beyond the students' ability, they will find it too frustrating.

7. Standard English

The passage should be written in standard English, unless the purpose is to teach the students something about a non-standard dialect. Again, this is usually only appropriate for more advanced students.

A wide variety of authentic material is available to the English teacher. A few types of reading material are listed below.

1. News items about interesting events or issues.
2. Advertisements.
3. Application forms for a job, a passport, a driver's license, and so on.
4. Invitations to parties, weddings, and so on.

5. Menus.
6. Letters or postcards.
7. Recipes.
8. Leaflets and brochures.
9. Programs (church, wedding, and so on)
10. Timetables and schedules (radio and TV programs, transportation timetables, and so on)

Vocabulary

Once the teacher has written or selected material, the next task is to pick out the vocabulary words that have to be defined. Which words need to be defined depends, of course, on the level of the students' English. Words that students are unlikely to know should be defined, as well as words or phrases that have a special meaning in context and words that have a special cultural meaning. Depending on the teaching situation, there may be a list of words that the students have learned by a certain academic level. If no such list exists, the teacher should consult a list of words arranged according to frequency and difficulty.

After the teacher has picked out vocabulary words, he/she next defines (not translates) them, using English that students know. An English-English learner's dictionary is helpful.

Skills Necessary for Reading

There are a number of basic skills necessary for reading, depending on the type of material and the purpose of reading. These skills include skimming to get an overall impression, scanning to find specific information, recognizing the main idea, noting details and understanding relationships, understanding the sequence of ideas, visualizing what is being described, and relating what one has read to one's own opinions, previous knowledge, and the opinions of others. The last is not strictly a reading skill, but it is an important skill for a reader to have.

1. Skimming to get an overall impression.

Skimming is a very useful skill which involves reading very rapidly in order to get a general impression of the material. Students can use this skill to look over a chapter quickly before beginning serious study, reading

over material quickly to see if it contains the type of information they are looking for, determining the author's point of view without noting specific arguments, and so on.

2. Scanning to find specific information.

Scanning is related to skimming in that the reader reads rapidly, but it is different in that the reader is looking for specific information. This requires the reader to be able quickly to sort out irrelevant material and to focus on what he/she is looking for.

3. Recognizing the main idea of a selection.

One of the most valuable of the basic reading skills is the ability to recognize the main idea of a passage. This involves distinguishing the most important thought from supporting details, examples, etc. In much everyday reading, noting the central idea(s) is all that is necessary, and even when reading a textbook, a student often picks out the main idea(s) before going on to read the passage in detail.

4. Noting details and understanding relationships

Another valuable skill is the ability to note details. The reader must be able not only to find the details but also to understand the relationships among them and their relationships to the main idea(s) of the passage. Details may explain, illustrate, define, or describe the central idea(s). The reader must be able to understand these relationships and also to pick out the most important details and not be distracted by those that are not important. This skill is especially vital in studying.

5. Understanding the sequence of events or ideas.

In reading, it is important to be able to understand the sequence of events or ideas. This also involves the understanding of cause-effect relationships and following the author's train of thought as he/she moves from one idea to another.

6. Visualization.

When the author describes something physical, the reader must have the ability to visualize it.

7. Relating what one has read to one's own opinions, previous knowledge, and the opinions of others.

Beyond being able to get meaning from written material, the reader must also be able to relate

what he/she has read to other things — previous knowledge and experience, opinions of others, and so on. While this is not actually a reading skill, it is a very important skill for a reader to have.

Exercises, Their Purposes, and How to Develop Them

There are many types of exercises to help students develop these skills. I will discuss some of these exercises, their purposes and how to develop them. First of all, however, it is important to emphasize that these exercises are for training rather than for testing. The teacher should not only make sure that the students have the right answer, but also help them understand why it is the right answer. Doing the exercises also gives the student feedback as to how well he/she understands the reading passage.

1. Skimming exercises.

Skimming exercises may give students practice in looking for specific information or in getting the main ideas and/or an overview of the reading. It may also prepare the students for later detailed reading and help them learn basic terms used in the passage, so that detailed reading will be easier.

In making skimming exercises, the teacher can ask questions that require students to skim or scan the reading passage. These questions may ask for specific facts or figures or for the main idea of the story or a paragraph or for the layout of the story, depending on what is appropriate for a particular passage and what the teacher wants to teach with the passage.

The following are examples of skimming exercises. Look for numbers in the text and answer the following questions.

1. When was New Orleans founded?
2. How much of the present continental United States did the Louisiana colony include?
3. When did the Battle of New Orleans take place?
4. When did the British attack Washington, D.C.?
5. How many British soldiers were killed in the Battle of New Orleans?

Read the passage rapidly and answer the following questions.

1. What is the origin of this passage?

2. What is its main subject?
3. What is the purpose of the broadcast?

For skimming exercises, it is especially important to instruct students *not* to read slowly and carefully. While they may get the correct answers to the questions, they are not developing the skills that skimming exercises are intended to help them develop. Also, students should be instructed not to use a dictionary or vocabulary list. It is not necessary for them to understand every word. The idea is for the students to find answers to specific questions and, or get an overview of the material.

2. Comprehension Questions.

The purpose of comprehension questions is to help the students find the main idea of the passage or paragraph and the details that support or illustrate the main idea. Depending on the level of the students and the teacher's purpose for a particular passage, the answers to the questions may come directly from the passage or may require the students to make connections between two or more pieces of information. In any case, the answers can be found in the passage itself and do not require any other information or require students to give an opinion.

Comprehension questions may take several different forms. They may be true/false questions, multiple choice questions, short answer questions, and so on.

True/false questions — When making true/false questions, the false statements should be plausible in the context of the reading passage and should be based on some possible misunderstanding of the text. The answers should not fall into a pattern, for example, T F T F or T F F T T F F. Students can pick up the patterns very quickly. It is not necessary to have an equal number of true and false statements; again, if student notice this, they will adjust their answers to fit. Correct statements should paraphrase the reading passage, not repeat it exactly. (Rivers and Temperly, 1978, p.247)

In addition to "true" and "false" answers, a third possible answer, "don't know," can be included. This is for statements that include information not included in the passage.

The teacher should avoid using such words as "always" and "never," since students who have good test-taking strategies will recognize that

statements containing such words are usually false. Multiple choice questions — Like the false statements in true/false questions, the incorrect alternatives in multiple choice questions should seem logical in the context of the story and should reflect an element that students might have misunderstood. Also, the correct answer should not come directly from the text, so that the students can't identify the correct answer without understanding its meaning. (Rivers and Temperly, 1978, p.245) Short answer questions — The type of short answer questions that the teacher makes depends on the level of students' reading ability. For lower-level students, content questions (Who, what, when, etc., and yes-no questions) are most appropriate. They require students only to find information from the passage, but not to discuss the implications of the information. More advanced students should be asked implication questions (Why, if...then what, and questions whose answers require more explanation). In order to answer this type of question, the student must put together information from different parts of the passage and think about the implications of what he/she has read. (Rivers and Temperly, 1978, pp.243—244)

3. Chart Exercise

A chart exercise presents a chart which students fill in with information from the reading passage. Some information may be filled in to help orient students.

The purposes of chart exercises are to help students understand the pas-

The Johnson Children's Daily Schedule

Time	Tyler	Katelyn
7:30	gets up	
8:30		follows her mother around
10:30		
11:30		
1:30		
5:00		wakes up, has lunch
6:00		
8:00		
Bed-Time		

Name of restaurant	Kind of food	Speciality	Prices

sage as a whole and the relationships among ideas or facts in the passage. Charts also help students analyze the information given to them.

Not all passages are appropriate for chart exercises. For a chart exercise to be appropriate, the passage must contain a parallel series of information. The following are three examples of chart exercises. The first example comes from a reading about a family's schedule. The second comes from a passage that includes information about four different restaurants. The last is from a reading explaining American television and different types of programs that appear.

Fill in this chart with the types of programs mentioned in this article and a description or examples, if any are given.

Type of program	Description or example
1. Serial	
2.	
3.	program previously shown on prime time
4.	national and local
5. Cartoon	
6.	
7.	
8. Movie	
9.	
10.	
11.	"Shogun" and "Roots"

12. Combination comedy and drama
13. Segment involving some issue, followed by discussion
4. Organization Exercise

In an organization exercise, the students are given several statements from the reading passage and instructed to put them either in the order that they occurred in the passage or, in the case of a narrative or directions, to put them in chronological order.

The purpose of organization exercises is to help students understand the sequence of events or progression of ideas. The exercise becomes a summary of the reading passage when it is finished, and so helps students to understand the development of ideas in the passage.

How an organization exercise is made depends, of course, on the passage. In the case of an essay, the teacher usually makes statements summarizing each paragraph. (In this case, the exercise can also be used to help students understand the function of paragraphs in English.) If the passage is a narrative, the teacher makes statements of each of the major events in the story. In the case of directions, a statement should be made of each step. As with other types of exercises, the statements should paraphrase the passage, not come directly from it.

The following are examples of organization exercises. The first example is from a pancake recipe; the second is from an essay about women's liberation. Put the following steps in the order that you would do them if you were making the pancakes.

- a. Cook the pancakes until they are golden brown underneath.
- b. Set the frying pan over low heat.
- c. Add the egg mixture to the dry ingredients and mix.
- d. Brown the pancakes on the underside.
- e. Sift the flour, measure it, and then sift the dry ingredients together.
- f. Serve with butter and syrup or honey.
- g. Beat the egg and add milk and butter.
- h. Turn the pancakes.
- i. Drop the batter on the hot frying pan.

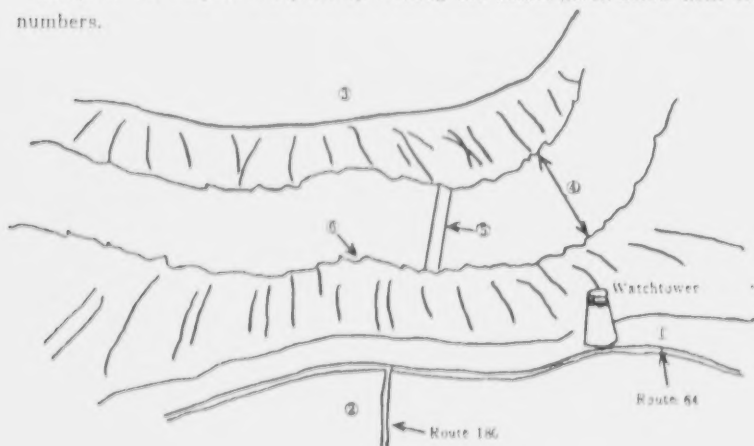
Put the following statements in the order of the article.

- a. American society traditionally views women as being best suited to be housewives and mothers and has limited them to certain jobs.
- b. Attitudes in the United States toward women's roles vary a great deal, but more people hold liberal views now.
- c. There are two goals of women's liberation.
- d. Society is changing slowly though laws allow women more opportunities.
- e. Physical beauty has been more important for American women than any other characteristic.
- f. There was a study done using university graduates.
- g. The president of a cosmetics manufacturing firm made a statement concerning the most important things for women.

5. Visualization Exercise

Visualization exercises can be used to confirm the students' understanding of descriptive vocabulary. The teacher may ask students to draw something described in the story or may provide a picture or diagram and have students label parts of it. The following is an example of the latter, taken from a reading about the Grand canyon.

Complete the map of the park by writing the names given below next to the numbers.



the North Rim
 the South Rim
 inner gorge
 the Suspension Bridge
 Desert View
 the Colorado River

6. Cloze Exercise

A cloze exercise is a summary of the reading passage or part of it, with blanks that the students fill in. A cloze exercise helps students understand content, vocabulary, grammar, and structure. It helps the students learn to recognize the same information in a different form and acts as a summary of the passage.

There are two ways of making a cloze exercise. In the classic cloze, every *n*th word (usually fifth, sixth, or seventh) is a blank. If the teacher wants to emphasize structure and grammar, this is the type of cloze exercise he/she should develop. Since there will be more function words than content words, chances are more blanks will be filled by function words. On the other hand, if the teacher wants to emphasize content and vocabulary, a modified cloze exercise is better. In a modified cloze exercise, the teacher leaves content words or vocabulary words blank.

As a general rule, there should be no blanks in the first or last sentences to give students a chance to orient themselves. When making a cloze exercise, the teacher should be careful not to leave too many blanks.

7. Outline exercise.

An outline exercise has an outline of the passage with blanks that the students must fill in. Like the cloze exercise, it helps the students understand content and vocabulary and learn to recognize the same material in a different form. It also helps them see the relative importance of the material and understand the overall idea. An outline exercise can also be used to teach students how to outline, a skill that will help them learn to pick out the main idea and details in a paragraph and understand the relationships among them.

To make an outline exercise, the teacher outlines the passage, leaving

some of the key words blank. As with the cloze exercise, the teacher should be careful not to leave too many blanks.

The following is an outline exercise, taken from a passage about the Battle of New Orleans and its relationship to the history of that city.

Find the words in the text that belong in the blanks.

- I. Introduction to the history of _____
 - A. Founding of New Orleans by the French in _____
 - B. Sale of Louisiana to Spain in _____
 - C. Return to Louisiana to France in _____
 - D. Purchase of Louisiana by the U.S. in _____
- II. An event which brought New Orleans closer to the _____
- III. About The _____ 1812
 - A. British attack of _____, _____
 - B. British attack of _____
 1. New Orleans' _____ importance
 2. New Orleans' _____ importance
- IV. British _____ methods
- V. The _____ soldiers
 - A. From the _____
 - B. _____ by office workers in New Orleans.
 - C. _____ by General Andrew Jackson
- VI. The _____
- VII. America's _____
 - A. The belief that it had helped to _____
 - B. The ironic fact that a _____ between Britain and America had been signed the the battle

8. Discussion questions

Discussion questions ask the students' opinions about something in the passage and/or ask the students to relate what they have learned from the passage to their opinions, experience, previous knowledge, and so on. This helps students learn to express themselves in English, to expand on the ideas of the main text, and to gain a deeper understanding of the passage, while reinforcing certain structures and vocabulary and providing meaningful

practice of them.

The type of questions the teacher asks depends, of course, on the type of reading passage. It is often a good idea, however, to ask narrow, fairly concrete questions to build up to more general, abstract concepts. If the reading is about an issue, the teacher can ask the students' opinions on that issue, ask them to compare their opinions on the issue, and later ask them about broad principles related to the issue. If the passage is about an English-speaking culture, the teacher can ask students to find various aspects of that culture in the passage and to compare and contrast the English-speaking culture with their own.

As a general rule, the exercises should be arranged with those that require only recognition before those that require increasing degrees of production. For example, true/false questions should come before short answer questions. Discussion questions should be last, because they require the greatest amount of production. The exception is the skimming exercise, which should be first.

In conclusion, the teacher who can develop his/her own materials has a great advantage. He/she is better able to meet students' needs — whether the material is used by itself or in conjunction with published material — and is able to take advantage of students' interests to motivate them. "Materials prepared by the classroom teacher who is familiar with the needs and interests of her students are indispensable aids to teaching." (Khoo, 1979, p. 55).

LIST OF REFERENCES

- Harris, Albert J. and Edward R. Sipay. *How to Increase Reading Ability*. 6th ed. ; New York : Longman, Inc., 1975.
- Khoo, Rosemary. "Make Your Own Reading Materials," *Guidelines for Teaching Reading Skills*. Edited by Rosemary Khoo et al. Singapore : Regional Language Centre, 1979.
- Kitao, Kenji and Hideo Miyamoto. "Japanese College Students' English Reading Ability — A Study Based on Testing —," *Doshisha Studies in English*, No. 30(1982).
- Rivers, Wilga M. and Mary S. Temperly. *A Practical Guide to the Teaching of English as a Second or Foreign Language*. New York : Oxford University Press, 1978. Tay, Mary W.J. "Teaching Reading Comprehension : A Skills

Approach," *Guidelines for Teaching Reading Skills*. Edited by Rosemary Khoo *et al.* Singapore : Regional Language Centre, 1979.

(Note : Examples of exercises are from Kitao, Kenji *et al.* *An American Sampler*. Kyoto : Japan International Center, 1982.) The project that this paper is based on was partially funded by Japan Association of Language Teachers research grants in 1980 and 1981.